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"Silencio": hearing loss in David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*

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Abstract
In a filmmaking career replete with extraordinary images and sounds, David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001) stands out for attention as a striking and seemingly inexhaustible resource for analysis. In this article, this film is used to examine the specific ways in which Lynch uses pre-existing pop songs to wrap the spectator within the filmic soundscape. Nowhere is the complexity and uncanniness of pop music made more explicit than in Rebekah Del Rio's stunning performance of "Llorando (Crying)" in the Club Silencio scene. The split between the singer's powerful performance and her subsequent collapse with the sound of the voice left hanging in the air marks a pivotal point in the film. This scene, coupled with other examples of feminine jouissance, is contrasted with the deadening roar of the master's voice, which solely demands obedience but is deaf to any reply. At the core of this article is an analysis of the status of the voice (and the gaze) as examples of the Lacanian object *a* and its relationship to Marx's concept of surplus value. *Mulholland Drive* provides a powerful demonstration of how these concepts can be seen, heard, and felt in relation to film, and how sound can reverberate into the spaces and silences beyond the screen.

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Throughout his filmmaking career, David Lynch has provided a unique "voice" in the field of cinematic sound. The impact of his esoteric, haunting, and disturbing soundscapes has rightfully been acknowledged by leading film scholars. Indeed, Michel Chion goes as far as to argue that "Lynch can be said to have renewed the cinema by way of sound … [and that in Lynch's films] … Sound has a precise function, propelling us through the film, giving us a sense of being inside it, wrapped within its timespan."[1] This proposition that the spectator is "held" by the film and enclosed within its temporality also suggests that the spectator is simultaneously wrapped within the folds of the filmic soundscape, which opens up interesting areas for analysis and discussion about this rich and complex body of work. Lynch's idiosyncratic use of sound design can be traced back to his first "moving painting," *Six Men Getting Sick* (1967), made as a fine art student at the

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Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, in which a siren was used to accompany a 1-minute film loop of animated visuals which were projected onto a specially designed sculpture-screen. His early forays into film sound were initially carried out in close conjunction with Alan Splet until *Blue Velvet* (1986), when Lynch started his long and productive collaboration with Angelo Badalamenti.

In this article, I want to focus specifically upon Lynch's use of pre-existing pop songs and how these are used in unexpected ways within the work. Indeed, it is probably not unreasonable to suggest that, after being in a Lynch film, each pop song comes to take on a new life form, pulsating with a different type of energy and resonating new, unexpected meanings and effects/affects, requiring audiences to revisit their previous knowledge and understanding of these songs: nothing is ever the same again. I will be concentrating my discussion upon Rebekah Del Rio's rendition of "Llorando (Crying)" in *Mulholland Drive* (2001), which, I will argue, acts as a most revealing case study to demonstrate the efficacy and impact of Lynch's singular use of pop music. Chris Rodley argues that "Lynch might in any case have proved to be contemporary cinema's most astute director when it comes to using 'found' music."[2] By reflecting upon the specificities of Lynch's use of Rebekah Del Rio's Spanish language version of Roy Orbison's "Crying," I want to consider how this scene functions within the narrative, visual, and aural complexities of the film.

In recent years, Lynch has devoted his time to recording two albums of music, *Crazy Clown Time* (2011) and *The Big Dream* (2013), rather than filmmaking. However, it would appear that he is about to reprise the television series *Twin Peaks* after a 25-year hiatus.[3] His last two forays into film, *Mulholland Drive* (2001), which initially commenced as a television pilot, and *Inland Empire* (2006), date back some time, although their cultural impact and the concomitant critical responses continue to expand as academics and critics seek to come to terms with the complexities of both films. *Mulholland Drive* and *Inland Empire* both involve fractured narratives that critique, in various ways, Hollywood and the wider film industry. In one sense, these films can be seen as partial allegories for Lynch's place within Hollywood and the American film industry, as an art director situated at its edges, whilst also signifying his love of both Los Angeles and Hollywood, with all the ambiguities the location and film industry provide. He told Chris Rodley that he first came to Los Angeles in 1970 at night and that "I woke up in the morning and I'd never seen light so bright. A feeling comes with this light—a feeling of creative freedom. So for me it was almost an immediate full-tilt love affair from then on."[4] Lynch's love of Hollywood and the Golden Age of American filmmaking during the days of the studio system can be seen in the way that Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) has been a close reference point for him throughout his filmmaking career. The film was initially screened to suggest to the cast and crew the required mood for *Eraserhead* (1976), and has been a key reference from then on. The film captures for Lynch both the magic and the damaging effects of the film industry upon those who are lured to the city of dreams in the hope of creating cinematic history and immortality. As the television announcer (William Macy) puts it in *Inland Empire*, "the stars make dreams and dreams make stars." Key signifiers from *Sunset Boulevard* are also used within *Mulholland Drive*, particularly the "Sunset Boulevard" road sign as the "dark-haired woman" makes her way into Los Angeles following her road accident at the start of the film. In fact, the car used in *Mulholland Drive*, parked on the set of Paramount Studios when Betty Elms arrives for her audition, is the actual one used in *Sunset Boulevard*.[5] But, for Lynch:

> *Mulholland Drive* is about more than Hollywood, but it does touch on an aspect of it. Some people have seen satirical elements in the film. I hadn't really thought about it as such, but there is some satire swimming around in the mix. I certainly didn't set out to include any, but ideas come with many threads.[6]

In *Mulholland Drive*, the satirical ideas swimming in the mix are rather like Joe Gillis (William Holden), the dead narrator, filmed from underneath as he floats in Norma Desmond's (Gloria Swanson) swimming pool at the start of *Sunset Boulevard*. So while Lynch may not have wanted to satirise, explicitly, Hollywood and the American film industry, both *Mulholland Drive* and *Inland Empire* include narratives which comment metaphorically upon the industry. Both present complex tales of love, loss and regret which provide

the spectator with an intriguing glimpse into the complexities of the capitalist superstructure where ideology and commodity fetishism hide or distort the "reality" of the industry for all those involved, from producers to audiences. These effects/affects have been achieved in formal and narrative terms, as well as on a technological level. So, for instance, the use of digital technology in *Inland Empire* allowed Lynch to bypass the economic constraints of the mainstream film industry, to produce an even more complex narrative than the previous film. In addition, the film specifically references analogue technology in its narrative structure, thus inviting spectators to become dialectically engaged in the analogue and digital frameworks opened up by technological developments, the obsolescence occasioned by these changes, and their impact upon filmmaking and spectatorship.[7] Both films offer complex and intriguing accounts and critiques of the film industry from the perspectives of women "trapped" within it, in these tales of filmmaking "disease." Both metaphorically (and satirically) show us the film industry in a different way, one in which the upside-down and inverted "reality" of contemporary capitalist filmmaking and the commodity fetishism of its products can only be seen in metaphorical terms. The dream of Hollywood also reflects and refracts its darker underside, as these films show in their formal and contextual density.

VOICING CONCERN

The complex relationship between Hollywood, filmmaking in the days of the studio system, and the contemporary situation is dealt with in intriguing ways in both of these films. Yet, within a filmmaking career replete with extraordinary combinations of sound images, Rebekah Del Rio's rendition of "Llorando," a Spanish language version of Roy Orbison and Joe Melson's "Crying" of 1961, in the Club Silencio scene from *Mulholland Drive*, stands out (for me) as a most important resource for analysis. It is captivating both in its singularity within the film and as an example of a recurrent motif within the overall body of work. In one sense, the scene refers back to previous examples of mimed singing in Lynch's films, such as Ben's (Dean Stockwell) performance of Roy Orbison's "In Dreams" in *Blue Velvet* (1986), as well as Frank Booth's (Dennis Hopper) later sexually charged beating up of Jeffrey Beaumont (Kyle Maclachlan) at Deer Meadow with the song playing on the car stereo system behind him as Frank mimes the words during his attack on Jeffrey. The first time the song is used, Ben picks up a work light as a microphone for his mime. The light from the lamp shines brightly and unsparingly upon Ben's heavily made-up face, highlighting the façade that hides his menace, as Frank looks on, lost in wonder and admiration for his perverse friend. Interestingly, Lynch planned to use Orbison's "Crying" for *Blue Velvet* but changed his mind when he heard "In Dreams" on Orbison's greatest hits collection, and decided the latter song was more appropriate for *Blue Velvet*.[8] "Crying" then had to wait in Lynch's memory bank until *Mulholland Drive* came into being many years later.

It was also during the making of *Blue Velvet* that Lynch was introduced to Angelo Badalamenti, who was brought in originally as a vocal coach for Isabella Rossellini, and whose breathy rendition of "Blue Velvet," singing into a period microphone stand while Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper) looks on in tears as he holds a piece of Dorothy's blue dressing gown in The Slow Club, was one iconic moment in the film. But, tangentially, we can also reference Lynch's love of pop music in James Hurley (James Marshall), Maddy Ferguson (Sheryl Lee), and Donna Hayward's (Lara Flynn-Boyle) rendition of "Just You and I" in episode 9 of the television series *Twin Peaks* (1990–1991).[9] Here, the three characters are shown playing and tape recording the song in Donna Hayward's house using a 1950s microphone, but where the post-production effects are brought to the fore to intensify the affective meaning of the song within the interweaving relationships between them. Here, it is the juvenile pop song and its clichéd affectiveness within the lives of adolescents that Lynch was drawn to. As he puts it, "It's a cliché scene, in a way, but in a million living rooms [young] people get together and they noodle around and they play something for somebody and there's nothing like it."[10] As well as referring back to previous examples of Lynch's use of music and sound, the Club Silencio scene also looks forward to *Inland Empire*, to which I will return later on.

Without wishing to occlude the complex narrative temporality of *Mulholland Drive*, I intend to take the Club Silencio scene in isolation, as a synecdoche, to seek to pinpoint the specificity of

Rebekah Del Rio's performance as a means of reflecting upon the importance of this song within the overall structure of the film. The scene comes approximately two-thirds into the film after Betty (Naomi Watts) and Rita (Laura Elena Harring) make love amidst a non-diegetic swelling orchestral score that heightens the intensity of their passion. Subsequently, in the middle of the night, Rita starts talking in her sleep, repeating the words "silencio" and "no hay banda" before demanding that Betty "go with me somewhere . . . Right now." Driven through a largely deserted, nocturnal city by taxi, they arrive at the Club Silencio. The interior of the club is a traditional, classical theatre, used by Lynch in a lot of his work, such as the space for the Lady in the Radiator in *Eraserhead* (1976), or the cinema auditorium that Nikki Grace/Susan Blue (Laura Dern) walks into in *Inland Empire*. With the interior architectural features seemingly at odds with the building's unexceptional exterior, we are brought into an uncanny space. Betty and Rita enter the sparsely populated banked seating area looking down onto the stage below, where Bondar (Richard Green), a magician, is shown, seemingly waiting for them to arrive before starting the show, informing us that "No hay banda! There is no band! Il n'est pas de orquestra! This is all . . . a tape recording. No hay banda! And yet we hear a band." He thereby repeats several of the words and phrases that Rita had spoken earlier in bed. He also demonstrates his proclamations by thrusting his arms in the air as sounds of various musical instruments being played without a visible source appear as if from nowhere, before a muted-trumpet player (Conte Candoli) enters the stage from behind (typical Lynchian) red curtains and appears to be playing the instrument only for him, then raises his arms in the air as the sounds of the trumpet continue to play. Following this, the magician also repeats his earlier action of raising his arms, and we are shown the strange, impassive figure of the "Blue-Haired Lady" (Cori Glazer) sitting in a box by the side of the stage, as sounds of thunder and lightning emerge, which, accompanied by the magician's malevolent gaze from the stage, appear to cause Betty to shake violently and involuntarily in her seat. The magician then disappears in blue-tinged smoke and shadows that swathe the stage and auditorium. When the screen returns to normal shortly after this, the M.C. (Geno Silva, who had played the manager of the Park Hotel earlier in the film) introduces "La Llorona de Los Angeles, Rebekah Del Rio," who stumbles onto the stage in an apparently semiconscious, drunken, or drugged state; similar, however, to that of "the dark-haired woman"/Rita at the start of the film following her car accident on Mulholland Drive. As she enters the stage, she is accompanied by the sound of wind that whistles quietly in the background. She taps the microphone, which suggests that it is "working," before starting her song. "La Llorona," the Spanish term for "The Weeping Woman," is an old Hispanic tale about the river of life that became a river of death. She represents the ghost of a woman weeping for her dead children whom she murdered after being abandoned by her lover, and her appearance is held to foreshadow death.[11] The lyrics of "Crying" also refer to an abandoned lover's encounter with the one who no longer reciprocates, leading to the singer's tears.

As Rebekah Del Rio sings a cappella, her (at first sight) ostensibly genuine rendition is largely framed in close-ups, demonstrating the mounting intensity of her performance, as well as showing us her gaudy stage eye make-up and decorative false tear on her face, which should alert us and warn us to be on guard against Lynch's manipulation. The song starts quietly, but as it develops the sound of her voice appears to permeate the entire theatre. The close-ups show us the perceived physicality of her performance as the sound of her voice increases in volume and expressive delivery. Interspersed with these shots are those of Betty and Rita, who start to cry as they are moved by the performance, as if the song enters their bodies, breaking down the barrier between outside and in. In the midst of the song, Del Rio collapses as the voice continues, hanging in the air. In one sense, this performance can be seen as a supreme example of Michel Chion's notion of a specifically Lynchian concept of music that "involves the sensation of the instrument or solo voice as bare, fragile, trembling in the void."[12]

Arguing from a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective, Todd McGowan suggests that:

> As with the emcee, the fact that she sings in Spanish indicates that the words here are not the heart of the matter: what is crucial instead is Del Rio's voice–the voice detached from her body as an object, the voice as an

> impossible object. Despite their knowledge that the song is not live, Betty and Rita find themselves caught up in it anyway, unable to disavow this knowledge. They experience the enjoyment of the impossible object in the voice. The song moves Betty and Rita to tears because it communicates a sense of loss. Rebekah Del Rio is "crying" over the lost love object, over the lost sexual relationship, and this touches Betty and Rita, as they feel the incipient loss of what they have experienced. This feeling of loss marks the inevitable conclusion of the female fantasy.[13]

A familiar Lynchian trope, that of the falling (fallen) woman, in this instance and from this Lacanian perspective, physically and metaphorically demonstrates the falling apart of Betty's fantasy, as we are to find out shortly after this scene. But what else can we make of *this* voice and its relationship to the rest of the film? Also arguing from a Lacanian position, Mladen Dolar makes the point that singing "brings the voice energetically to the forefront, on purpose, at the expense of meaning."[14] And, in this scene, we can be beguiled and lured by the aesthetics of the voice in this remarkable performance (both recorded and acted out). In addition to Betty and Rita, the audience too can be deceived; even though we too know that this is all recorded, the aesthetic pleasure of hearing this voice singing this song of loss takes over our knowledge, disavowing us of it. By focusing on the voice, it turns it into a fetish object whereby the "aesthetic pleasure obfuscates the object voice."[15] In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the voice is, like the gaze, one of the paramount lost objects, *objets (petit) a*/objects *a*.[16] Betty and Rita (and the audience) are moved by this voice; it causes their tears to fall even before Del Rio collapses and the voice hangs alone in the air. The fetish object is the opposite of the voice as object *a*, but this gesture is always ambivalent: "music evokes the object voice and obfuscates it; it fetishizes it, but also opens up the gap that cannot be filled," as Dolar puts it.[17]

The words for this version of "Crying" were written for Rebekah Del Rio by the Venezuelan lyricist Thania Sanz, who was requested to make them stick as closely as possible to the lyrics of the original version. "Crying" has been a favourite song of Del Rio since she was very young, and she has been singing it a cappella since 1993. Indeed, it was this song that led to her first recording contract. Interestingly and ironically, Del Rio first sang her version of the song live for Lynch at his studio in Los Angeles unaware that it was being recorded. As she says, "I sang with all my heart and soul and left shortly after. Little did I know that the recording would haunt David to the point of writing a special part in his then [TV] pilot, 'Mulholland Drive'."[18] And it was this version that was used in the subsequent film, in terms that are reversed (i.e. the originally performed song is now "re-performed" by miming to the recorded soundtrack), and where Lynch can experiment with the complexities of filmic sound and audience response in a most revealing manner. It is also telling that the recording technology used in Rebekah Del Rio's audition is as important as the microphone stand used in the scene in the film. Lynch recalls that, when she turned up to meet him, he'd organised for "a very *beautiful* microphone—[to be set up] in one of the booths in my recording studio."[19] And, by *beautiful*, Lynch means an old-fashioned, solidly manufactured microphone used by so many of his characters when singing, which evokes the emergence and heyday of pop music's electric presence in the 1950s.

In the exquisitely rendered visual and aural complexities of the Club Silencio scene, Lynch makes plain and problematises a "fact" about film sound. As Liz Greene points out, "It would be a futile exercise to seek out an 'authentic' voice in the cinema as soundtracks are often made up of numerous takes, re-voiced or dubbed."[20] Yet, in Rebekah Del Rio's case, she sang the song only once, and that "haunting" rendition became a key element in the exploration of the disintegration of Betty's fantasy within the formal and narrative complexities of the subsequent feature film of *Mulholland Drive*.[21] When it came to using Rebekah Del Rio's audition recording in the actual film, Lynch recalls that:

> The lip sync that she did when we actually shot that scene much later was like the best I've ever seen. She's the original singer, of course, but even so there are singers who can't do that—the lips and the tongue and the breaths don't work. But this was *perfect* in every way.[22]

When questioned by Chris Rodley as to whether the character of Betty is Diane's "mime" and whether the entire film is in effect a "mime," Lynch was drawn into long silences.[23] His reluctance to

discuss his films and thereby diminish their "magic" runs throughout his interviews across his entire film career. However, in this instance, his silences are perhaps usefully revealing and cry out for a more detailed analysis about the specificities of this song and scene within *Mulholland Drive*, to see if we can come to a better understanding of the specificity of this voice and this performance within the overall structure of the film. Taking Michel Chion's concept on acousmatic sound, borrowed from Pierre Schaeffer, as his starting point, Mladen Dolar argues that:

> The acousmatic voice is simply a voice whose source one cannot see, a voice whose origin cannot place. It is a voice in search of an origin, in search of a body, but even when it finds a body, it turns out that this doesn't quite work, the voice doesn't stick to the body, it is an excrescence which doesn't match the body.[24]

Dolar cites the cinematic paradigm of this as being the mother's voice in *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960). He also points out that cinema is in some senses a privileged art form when it comes to exploring the uncanny nature of the acousmatic voice in that it combines the gaze and the voice: "Thus the deception lies in the inability to find its match in the visible, in the gap which always persists between the two, in the impossibility of their coordination, so that *the visible as such can start to function as the veil of the voice*."[25] Cinema's specificity is such that neither its sounds nor its images are fixed. The dancing play of shadows on the white screen seemingly gives both the images and the sounds their existence and a form of presence, while simultaneously pointing to their absence, which is disavowed in the act of spectatorship. In this performance, Del Rio's voice fills the air via electronic transmission devices, while unattached to the body that originally brought it forth in another time and place.

The "gap" between the visual and the aural is remarked upon by Jean-Luc Nancy in his book *Listening*, when he argues that:

> In semi-Lacanian terms, the visual is on the side of the imaginary capture (which does not imply that it is reduced to that), while the sonorous is on the side of the symbolic referral/*renvoi* (which does not imply that it exhausts its amplitude). In still other words, the visual is tendentially mimetic, and the sonorous tendentially methexic (that is, having to do with participation, sharing, or contagion), which does not mean that these tendencies do not intersect.[26]

In narrative terms, immediately after this performance, Betty reaches into her bag to find a small square blue box with a triangular keyhole in it, which is the same shape as the key Rita had found earlier in her handbag together with a large amount of money following her car accident on Mulholland Drive. Returning to the apartment to open the box, Betty vanishes from view, following which Rita then opens the box, and the camera zooms into the void, the interior space of the box, before we hear it fall to the floor, and Rita too then disappears, and we are next shown "Betty's aunt" Ruth, returning to her apartment from her trip to Canada, to see no trace of either Betty's or Rita's occupancy. This would suggest, as McGowan argues, that Betty's fantasy has indeed collapsed, and we subsequently see her in the world of desire as Diane Selwyn, a failed starlet in Hollywood who has organised her ex-lover's murder, with a more prosaic blue Yale key lying on the coffee table, symbolising that the murderous act has been carried out. In the world of fantasy, the key and box can be more enigmatic; in that of Diane's desire and reality, it returns in a more mundane, everyday form.

ON YOUR MARX

The Club Silencio scene is often compared with an earlier scene in *Mulholland Drive* when Betty auditions for a part in a proposed film at Paramount Studios and where her performance is riveting, turning a banal script into a highly sexually charged and tightly framed scene. Immediately following this audition scene, Betty is taken onto the set of a new film, "The Sylvia North Story," where the director, Adam Kesher (Justin Theroux), is auditioning actors for the lead female role. As she walks onto the set, Betty and Adam make eye contact, shots of which are framed in individual extreme close-up, highlighting some knowledge of contact between them, which is "lost" in the fantasmatic scenario Betty has "dreamt" up. Adam has just seen one potential candidate, Carol (Elizabeth Lackey), along with backing singers, mime a version of Connie Stevens' hit "Sixteen Reasons (Why I Love You)" (1960) in a booth

recreating a 1950s–1960s television studio, before another single woman, again wearing similar period clothes, make-up, and hairdo, walks into the booth for her audition. This Camilla Rhodes (Melissa George) lip-synchs Linda Scott's 1961 version of Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein's 1932 song, "I've Told Every Little Star." Kesher, aware that this is the same girl whose photograph he had been presented with by the Castigliane brothers (Angelo Badalamenti and Dan Hedaya) at the bizarre meeting at the studio offices early on in the narrative, now announces to his management that "This is the girl!," a key sentence that reoccurs throughout the film, thereby acquiescing to the pressure placed upon him to accept this woman as his leading female star as a condition of the film being financed. Both of these audition performances on set are presented in a straightforward manner, recreating the appearance of the standardised commodity form of late 1950s and early 1960s pop songs. Yet, even within these renditions, Lynch seems uncannily prescient at being able to pick out the strangeness of pop music. The careful coiffure, clothing, and performances of these actresses in the auditions are at sharp variance with the more unkempt performance of Rebekah Del Rio and her wilder rendition, as well as the emotional expressiveness of Betty's soap opera audition, and bring to the fore key issues in relation to the film industry and female stars within the capitalist superstructure.

Underlying the world of sexual desire and fantasy created by the film are the machinations of the movie industry over which the film director, Adam Kesher, has no real control. The shady, amorphous, and ultimately corrupt nature of the capitalist film industry is demonstrated in the early scene in the film, mentioned above, when Adam meets the Castigliane brothers, one of whom, Luigi Castigliane, is played by Lynch's long-time musical collaborator, Angelo Badalamenti. It is here that Kesher is shown a photo résumé of Camilla Rhodes and is told that "This is the girl." As Adam tries to stick to his artistic vision of his film and seeks to deny the Castigliane brothers their demands, Vincenzo Castigliane (Dan Hedaya) rises to his feet and roars angrily at the top of his voice, before quietly telling Adam that it is no longer "his" film. Vincenzo's roar is that of the law; it is a senseless bellow that does not ask for understanding but only for obedience. The sound of such a bellow is, as Dolar points out, the voice of the Father that inherently sticks to *logos* itself, the voice that commands and binds, *le-père-la-jouissance* that accompanies the instituted law.[27] Dolar links this to Theodor Reik's analysis of shofar, the primitive form of horn used in Jewish religious rituals, which acts as "the voice of the Father, the cry of the dying primal father of the primitive horde, the leftover which comes both to haunt and to seal the foundation of his law,"[28] and which Reik reads as the key to its secret in the Freudian myth of *Totem and Taboo*, and to which Jacques Lacan refers in his seminar on *Anxiety*. In the latter, Lacan remarks about the otherness of the voice, its intrusion into us such that "A voice, therefore, is not assimilated, but incorporated."[29]

In this scene, Vincenzo Castigliane's bellow is a wild, diegetically acoustic roar that solely demands obedience, and the Castigliane brothers seem to be the key players who have ultimate control over the film. However, immediately following this scene, we see one of the directors of Ryan Entertainment discuss the outcome of the meeting with Mr Roque (Michael J. Anderson), whose voice is projected electronically via a microphone and a speaker in a glass panel. Mr Roque appears to inhabit a strange, nether space somewhere within the bowels of Ryan Entertainment's office building, and he implicitly gives the instruction that the film is to be closed down. Shortly afterwards, Adam Kesher receives a command to meet the Cowboy (Lafayette Montgomery), seemingly displaced in modern LA from an earlier time, at a liminal space beyond the confines of the modern city. These figures, together with various others who communicate with each other by telephone in their hunt for the "dark-haired woman" following her disappearance after the accident on Mulholland Drive, all appear to have a large degree of control over both her fate and that of the film. Adam Kesher's auteurial voice is thereby diminished as he has to accede to the demands of these various others in the making of his film. The film industry thereby appears to be hard to pin down, populated by a range of shady, amorphous figures who are located off-centre, and whose relationships to each other are difficult to assess but who appear to hold significant power. In his analysis of the relevance of Karl Marx's *Capital* for our current

times, Alex Callinicos makes a rare but astute filmic reference to comment upon alienation in capitalism when he writes that:

> The very alienation that workers and capitalists alike experience consists crucially in their subordination to the competitive logic of an inherently decentred set of economic relationships. Like Walker (Lee Marvin) in *Point Blank*, what we discover as we go deeper into the labyrinths of corporate power is no secret centre from which all power radiates but an impersonal structure staffed by functionaries.[30]

In Lynch's depiction of the contemporary film industry, power appears to lie in a web-like structure of interconnecting players, who all seem to inhabit liminal spaces outside the conventional structures of industrial organisation. They communicate obliquely via impersonal communication devices—an intercom in the case of Mr Roque, and by telephone, leaving short, esoteric, deictic messages. The seemingly impersonal nature of these utterances is, for Justus Nieland, central to Lynch's cinematic vision. He remarks that: "Another impersonal network is established through *Mulholland Dr*'s emphasis on communication technologies, especially vocal technologies like the telephone, microphone, and speaker."[31] I would argue, however, that what is at stake is the status of the voice and its effects/affects throughout the film (and Lynch's work generally) upon the characters in the filmic world and the spectator/auditor responses in front of the screen and speakers.

Jacques Lacan considered his concept of the object *a* to be his most significant contribution to psychoanalysis, and that this surplus enjoyment should be thought of as homologous to Karl Marx's development of the concept of surplus value—the excess creamed off from the worker by the capitalist. Whereas Adam Kesher is driven primarily, we would assume, by aesthetic desire in the creation of "his" film, "The capitalist in fact is totally indifferent toward the commodity that he is going to sell on the market," as Pietro Bianchi puts it.[32] "His" only concern is with the pure accumulation of abstract value—money. No reasons are put forward as to why this Camilla Rhodes should play the part; it is a demand that must be obeyed. In Lacan's discourse of the master, which signifies the modern, capitalist era, the signifying operation always produces a surplus, namely, object *a*. The master (S_1) is the agent who puts the slave (S_2), Kesher and the others involved in the film, to work; the result of this work is the surplus (*a*) that the master attempts to appropriate.[33] As Lacan puts it, "A real master doesn't desire to know anything at all—he desires that things work."[34] However, while the master requires the slave to produce the surplus as profit, "he" has no control or knowledge about it; it is the worker who produces "it." In this way, Lacan was able to extend Marx's ideas of the surplus by showing how it is articulated in analytic discourse as surplus jouissance,[35] an excess which shows itself in fantasy scenarios produced, for example, in the art of film, as opposed to the master's indifference to the commodity itself. As Lacan puts it, "in its fundamental beginning the master's discourse excludes fantasy. And that's what makes him, fundamentally, completely blind,"[36] and perhaps we could also say, for our purposes here, deaf.

In our examples of different voices, of Rebekah Del Rio's feminine jouissance and Vincenzo Castigliane's roar, can we draw any tentative conclusions? Dolar points out that it is not so much that there is a battle of *logos* against the voice, or *logos* versus the voice as an instrument of otherness, but rather that of *the voice against the voice*. As such, he asks:

> Is the voice of the Father an altogether different species from the feminine voice? Does the voice of the persecutor differ sharply from the persecuted voice? The secret may be that they are the same; that there are not two voices, but only the object voice which cleaves and bars the other in an ineradicable "extimacy."[37]

This Lacanian neologism of extimacy problematises the opposition between inside and outside, between container and contained, and can be spatially expressed in the topology of the torus and the Möbius strip, which is appropriate in our deliberations about the narrative complexities and the issues raised in many of Lynch's films, including *Mulholland Drive*. In the world of desire, following the Club Silencio scene, Diane loses Camilla (played now by Laura Elena Harring) to Adam Kesher. In her jealousy, she orders Camilla's murder, only for this to lead to her suicide as she is unable to live with the consequences of her actions. After her self-immolation, the final shots of the film take us back to Club Silencio and the

"Blue-Haired Lady" in the box above the stage who whispers "silencio." In terms of the film's structure and style, Roger Hillman argues that:

> From a mid-20th century starting point, the film fans in two directions, forwards to the end of the century via the 60s European allusions [Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966) and Godard's *Contempt* (1963)], and backwards to "Silenzio," cinema's acoustic origins in the silent era, and visual origins in the magic of Georges Méliès.[38]

In a different vein, Heather K. Love argues that *Mulholland Drive* is a remarkable film in that it takes Diane's tragedy, as a failed lesbian starlet in Hollywood, seriously.[39] In the political and libidinal economies of capitalist film production, the figure of the female star has been displayed as a prominent fetish object throughout the history of film, presenting sublime images of fascination and fear. Yet, as Lacan points out, the object *a* exceeds signification and cannot be contained within the filmic frame. It is a form of jouissance that the master cannot ultimately control, except in monetary terms, however hard he tries.

Lynch's remarkable film critiques the Hollywood film industry from inside by showing how fantasy implodes when pursued to its (il)logical conclusion and demonstrating the potential tragic consequences of fantasy and desire within the capitalist film industry, particularly for female stars. Rebekah Del Rio's Spanish language performance of a well-known pop song encapsulates both the veil of the voice and the gap that cannot be filled, resulting in an incredibly powerful critique of the industry and its damaging effects upon those actresses who seek to become stars within the system. It is a pivotal point in the film; it is this song which renders the impossibility of the fantasy continuing; it brings to the fore the gap between the object voice and the aesthetics of the voice, that which commerce may seek to control although it never can. It opens into the void, demonstrating the emptiness around which jouissance is based. It also wraps the spectator within the temporal, spatial, and affective complexities of the film to experience imaginatively the traumas and tribulations of the film's central characters, and the impossibility of being able to make clear sense because of the distorted lens of ideology through which the characters on screen, and the spectators in front of it, live. Lynch stated that:

> The ideas for *Mulholland Drive* just happened to present themselves and they were about a slice of this town, and that's the best you can do. It's always a slice, but that slice can have harmonics that feel pretty good. But it's not the whole picture. And the picture always changes anyway.[40]

Yet this slice of a story involving a young woman and her (failed) attempt to "make it" in Hollywood reflects most effectively upon the role of women in the film industry, which is changing significantly as digital technology comes to the fore. Lynch's film both is a paean for Hollywood in the Golden Age and, at the same time, acknowledges its downside as well as its up.

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

If silence does represent "everything that could be said," as Susan Sontag suggests,[41] then where does the closure of the film, with the "Blue-Haired Lady" whispering "silencio," leave the issues of singing and the voice? In one sense, in a Lynchian film, there is never any true silence; the Lynchian universe is constantly buzzing with the sounds of energy pulsating throughout it, and we are perhaps brought, as Slavoj Žižek suggests, "'to the point of hearing inaudible noises' and thus to confront the comic horror of the fundamental fantasy?"[42] Francois-Xavier Gleyzon remarks that "Lynch is a sort of cinematic seismograph," picking up invisible traces as a Deleuzian pure Event which itself waits for a future event which "can only be the moving image."[43]

Interestingly, Lynch's next feature-length film (and to date his latest), *Inland Empire* (2006), provided even greater freedom to pursue these critiques further, in a practical as well as a fictional sense. The complex interweaving of the differing subjectivties of Nikki Grace/Susan Blue, shot on digital DV tape, in widely different spatial and temporal situations over an extended period of time (which would not be economically available under the monetary constraints of mainstream film production), thus complicates and extends some of the issues raised in *Mulholland Drive* and discussed here. For example, the scene of young women dancing in synchronisation to a recording of Little Eva's performance of Gerry Goffin and Carole King's "The Loco-Motion" (1962), and then disappearing from view within Susan Blue's disintegrating subjectivity, similarly presents

a strange, Lynchian use of pop music in the narrative and aesthetic complexities of that film. However, for me, Rebekah Del Rio's performance and rendition of "Llorando (Crying)" stand out as a remarkable example of one of Lynch's most effective combinations of images and sounds, of a truly strangely moving scene. The various and growing analyses of Lynch's complex filmic works bring together a range of critical approaches, which can act as supplementary knowledge in the ongoing act of art writing, leading to a greater understanding of contemporary culture and its place within the wider social, political, and economic fields.

In relation to the various productive analyses of Lynch's work, Lacan's object *a*, as the object-cause of desire, provides a highly fertile means of linking together these different approaches via an analysis of the voice and sound in film, and the relationship between economic imperatives within the capitalist film industry and the aesthetic excess which goes beyond those imperatives. Lacan's concept allows for a wider consideration of the dialectic between the public and private spheres which Lynch explores so fruitfully in this tragic tale of a lesbian starlet in Hollywood. Yet, for Lacan:

> The difference that lies between dialectical thought and our experience lies in the fact that we do not believe in synthesis. If there exists a point of passage where the antinomy closes, then it's because it was already there before the antinomy was formed.[44]

Rebekah Del Rio's soulful rendition of "Llorando (Crying)," in Lynch's complex mediations between technology and aesthetics, provides another means of "understanding" or feeling the loss experienced by Betty Elms. By doing so, Lynch's singular use of pop music, as demonstrated in this stunning rendition, provides a highly effective and affective means of experiencing complex issues of aesthetics and ethics, as a prefigurative gesture towards other ways of thinking and being. The object *a*, as the object-cause of desire, produces both a lack and a remainder. As Lacan puts it, the latter "is what survives the ordeal of the division of the field of the Other through the presence of the subject."[45] Rebekah Del Rio's stunning performance of this song both opens up this lack and provides a sonorous envelope in which to locate the remainder, in both the characters on screen and the spectator/auditor in front of it. For Lacan, the voice is incorporated rather than assimilated, and what remains is "the voice unfastened from its support."[46] The voice, incorporated via the ear into our subjectivity, resonates and reverberates. For Betty Elms, it marks the breakdown of the fantasy; for the spectator/auditor, it may also make its own mark in all of us. For Jean-Luc Nancy, the "visual persists until its disappearance; the sonorous appears and fades away into its permanence."[47] Justus Nieland argues that "For Lynch, cinematic and romantic passion are marked by a shared *impersonality*, their doubled, disintegrative ethos."[48] Nieland quotes George Toles's comment about Betty Elms's audition scene that it demonstrates "sincerity hatched at the very core of artifice."[49] Yet, the emphasis upon artifice in a sense misses what is crucial about Lynch's film, and the key scenes—Betty's audition and Rebekah Del Rio's performance—act as a lure to hide the affectivity of these performances. In particular, Del Rio's voice resonates beyond the visual register into the sonorous where its effects can affect us all, in surprising ways, demonstrating the unique power of film to remain with us long after each viewing.

Notes

1. Michel Chion, *David Lynch*, 2nd ed. (London: British Film Institute, 2006), 42.
2. Chris Rodley, ed., *Lynch on Lynch*, rev. ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 125.
3. The news that David Lynch and Mark Frost were reprising *Twin Peaks*, 25 years after the show was axed by the television company ABC, was made by simultaneous tweets by both on 3 October 2014: "Dear Twitter Friends: That gum you like is going to come back in style," and on 6 October: "Dear Twitter Friends ... It is happening again." The latter included "A special TWIN PEAKS announcement. A message from TWIN PEAKS creators and executive producers David Lynch and Mark Frost," which included a 1:06-minute teaser trailer. The new series will consist of nine episodes, all of which are to be directed by Lynch, and they will be shown on the US cable network Showtime in 2016.
4. Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch*, 272.
5. Ibid., 273.
6. Ibid., 274.
7. In respect of the relationship between analogue and digital filmmaking and their impact upon Lynch's audio-visual work, see Liz Greene, "Bringing Vinyl into the Digital Domain: Aesthetics in David Lynch's *Inland Empire* (2006)," *The New Soundtrack*

2 (September 2012): 97–111; and Anne Jerslev, "The Post-Perspectival: Screens and Time in David Lynch's *Inland Empire*," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 2 (2012): 17298, doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/jac.v4i0.17298

8. Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch*, 128.
9. In referring to episode 9 of *Twin Peaks*, I am making reference to the episode list of the DVD boxed set (*Twin Peaks: The First Season*, Republic Entertainment Inc., 2002 [1990]) [video: DVD].
10. Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch*, 133.
11. Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Contacting the Power of the Wild Woman* (London: Rider, 1993), 301–18. See also Eugene Kenneth Willet, "Music as *Sinthome*: Joy Riding with Lacan, Lynch, and Beethoven beyond Postmodernism" (PhD thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2007), 110.
12. Chion, *David Lynch*, 41.
13. Todd McGowan, *The Impossible David Lynch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 214.
14. Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 30.
15. Ibid., 4.
16. In Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 124–6, the entry for *objet (petit) a* states that the term should remain untranslated, thus giving it the status of an algebraic sign. However, most recent translations of Lacan's work, including the seminars edited by Lacan's son-in-law, Jacques-Alain Miller, tend to use the anglicised version of object *a*, which I have followed in this article.
17. Ibid., 31.
18. Rebekah Del Rio, "The story behind Llorando," http://www.rebekahdelrio.com/llorando.html (accessed October 15, 2014).
19. Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch*, 291.
20. Liz Greene, "Speaking, Singing, Screaming: Controlling the Female Voice in American Cinema," *The Soundtrack* 2, no. 1 (2009): 65.
21. Ibid., 71. Greene also makes the important point that "What is interesting about the choice of this song is that, apart from Orbison's, the most famous version was recorded by the lesbian singer k.d. lang."
22. Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch*, 292.
23. Ibid., 293.
24. Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 60–1.
25. Ibid., 78 (emphasis in the original).
26. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 10.
27. Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 52, 55.
28. Ibid., 53.
29. Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book X* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 277.
30. Alec Callinicos, *Deciphering Capital: Marx's Capital and Its Destiny* (London: Bookmarks, 2014), 228.
31. Justus Nieland, *David Lynch* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 103.
32. Pietro Bianchi, "The Discourse and the Capitalist: Lacan, Marx, and the Question of the Surplus," *Filozofski vestnik, Letnik XXXI, Stevilka* 2 (2010), 123–37.
33. Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 45.
34. Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 24.
35. Ibid., 20.
36. Ibid., 108.
37. Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, 56.
38. Roger Hillman, "Film at the Millennium," *Screening the Past*, no. 28, http://tlweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/28/film-at-the-millennium.html (accessed October 15, 2014).
39. Heather K. Love, "Spectacular Failure: The Figure of the Lesbian in *Mulholland Drive*," *New Literary Review* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 117–32.
40. Rodley, *Lynch on Lynch*, 273.
41. Susan Sontag, "Aesthetics of Silence," quoted in Chris P. Miller, "Silence," *The University of Chicago: Keywords Glossary*, http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/silence.htm (accessed October 15, 2014).
42. Slavoj Žižek, *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's "Lost Highway"* (Seattle, WA: The Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities, 2000), 44.
43. Francois-Xavier Gleyzon, ed., *David Lynch in Theory* (Prague: Litteraria Pyagensia, 2010), 2–3. See also Frida Beckman, "Hearing Voices: Schizoanalysis and the Voice as Image in the Cinema of David Lynch," in *Psychoanalyzing Cinema: A Productive Encounter with Lacan, Deleuze, and Žižek*, ed. Jan Jagadzinski (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 71–88, for a fascinating Deleuzian (and Guattarian) reading of the Club Silencio scene as centred upon the "temporality of the event," in which the object *a* is read as positive, desiring and not lacking. Beckman points out that she is "interested here in Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of Lacan more than in Lacan's own work" and thus takes a different tack from my analysis, which is centred more upon Lacan's work itself.
44. Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety*, 270.
45. Ibid., 220.
46. Ibid., 274.
47. Nancy, *Listening*, 2.
48. Nieland, *David Lynch*, 96.
49. Ibid., 106 n. 95, quoting George Toles, "Auditioning Betty in *Mulholland Drive*," *Film Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2004), 9.